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United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

People in Partnership for a Healthy Land

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The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works hand-in-hand with the American people to conserve natural resources on private lands. We help land users and communities approach conservation planning and implementation with an understanding of how natural resources relate to each other and to all of us—and how our activities affect those resources.

NRCS is committed to government that works efficiently and is accountable. We are streamlining NRCS, strengthening its regional presence, delegating decisions to the local level, cutting red tape, and above all, putting clients first. The six regions—West, Northern Plains, Southwest, Midwest, South, and East—will decentralize the agency and make it more responsive to the Nation's major agricultural production regions and environments.

We are dedicated to the people, partnerships, and technology that will ensure the future of American agricultural productivity in harmony with a healthy land.

Natural Resource Challenges

We are facing enormous challenges, including:

- Sustaining the health of a limited agricultural land and water base;
- Maintaining a productive agriculture to meet national—and international—needs for food and fiber;
- Conserving and protecting our soil, water, air, plants, and animals;
- Designing public policies and programs to meet our most critical problems; and



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- Encouraging a national and international conservation ethic.

Responding to the Challenges

NRCS is changing to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges. We are:

- Expanding partnerships of skilled and caring people from government, industry, farms and ranches, cities, and suburbs;
- Applying technologies that enable us to understand how today's actions affect tomorrow's world;
- Researching and promoting ways of improving soil health;
- Restoring the health of watersheds; and
- Addressing global climate change by helping agriculture reduce its own and the Nation's share of global greenhouse gases.

Partners

Conservation and productive agriculture are the work of many; no one can do it alone. NRCS relies on its partners to help set conservation goals and work with people on the land. Our partners include individual land users; conservation districts; local, State, and Federal agencies; industry; agricultural, natural resource, and professional organizations; and volunteers.

America's locally run conservation districts—about 3,000 strong—are the heart of the conservation delivery system. Districts operate on a fundamental principle that local people know the most about their local needs and communities. Districts, and their technical and support staffs, augment the NRCS's work with local programs—with help from county and State conservation agency partners.

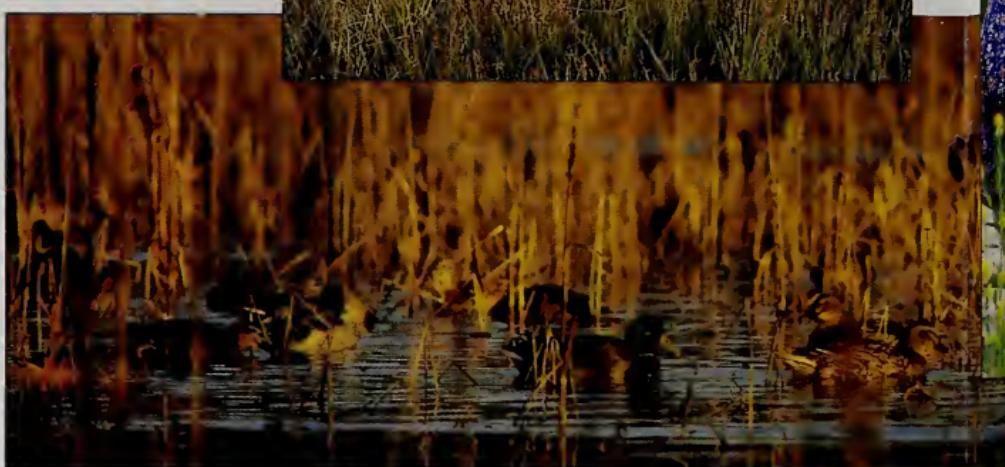
Better Conservation Through Science and Technology

Good science and practical technology are at the center of good land management, productive farming, and sound conservation. NRCS is a key source of resource information and technology, including:

- A national soil survey that provides soil resource data—by county. This information enables land users to make the best use of their soil resources and understand how that use affects the broader environment;
- Conservation systems designed for local conditions to sustain and improve soil and water quality by addressing erosion control, pesticide and nutrient management, irrigation water management, wetlands conservation and restoration, wildlife habitat improvement, flood control, and streambank stabilization;
- A total natural resources approach to conservation, based upon sound science and ecological principles, that enables land users to paint the conservation picture on the landscape;



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- A plant materials program that introduces new ways to use plants to protect and restore water quality and wetlands, and to reduce soil erosion; and
- Techniques for assessing and predicting soil erosion, agricultural nonpoint-source water pollution, and the effects of agricultural practices and management decisions on farm and ranch economics.

The Expertise and Experience To Respond

NRCS has the technical expertise and some six decades of experience to solve natural resource challenges and maintain and improve land users' economic viability. Our soil and plant scientists, agronomists, water and flood specialists, and erosion and sediment experts are dedicated to providing locally accessible information and guidance for the most efficient use of our natural resources.

Farmers and ranchers care for most of the Nation's privately owned land. They work voluntarily with NRCS to develop conservation plans and implement systems that protect and improve our natural resources—and provide healthy food, a healthy agriculture, and a healthy land.

Urban and rural communities seek NRCS help to identify environmental problems and to devise solutions for conserving and protecting water, curbing erosion, and meeting other resource challenges.



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Local, State, and Federal agencies; policymakers; and land users rely on NRCS for practical, science-based assistance.

American Indian tribes, Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders rely on NRCS help on conservation initiatives, resource inventories, and adapting conservation programs to fit the needs on native lands.

Countries around the globe seek NRCS advice to build conservation planning and delivery systems to help them cope with severe natural resource problems and to devise environmentally sound agricultural systems to meet their own future needs.

Join Us

There are many ways you can give your time and knowledge to help care for our natural resources, support a productive agriculture based on an ethic of stewardship, and ensure a healthy land for future generations. Call 1-800-THE SOIL for more information on natural resources conservation and volunteer opportunities.

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